



## ELECTION INTEGRITY – TRUTH ABOUT GEORGIA

Georgia Governor Brian Kemp (R-GA) signed SB202 into law on March 25, 2021.<sup>1</sup> This was the second state in 2021 to pass comprehensive reforms. Democrats' response to the bill was swift and riddled with inaccuracies. President Joe Biden called the reforms an “atrocious” and ordered the Justice Department to review the bill.<sup>2</sup>

The *Washington Post* gave Biden “four Pinocchios” for the incorrect statements he made about the new law.<sup>3</sup> Biden alleged it reduces voting hours and that polls would close at “five o’ clock when working people are just getting off work.”<sup>4</sup> Experts claim that the net effect of the bill will actually expand voting hours and adds an additional Saturday to early voting. It also requires that large polling places or precincts that had voters waiting in line more than one hour in the previous general election to either hire more staff, purchase more equipment, or reduce the size of the precinct.<sup>5</sup>

The bill addresses the following issues:<sup>6</sup>

- **Improves the security and accuracy of mail-in ballots.**
  - Changes timeline voters can request a mail-in ballot from 180 days to 11 weeks before an election.
  - To provide enough time to process them accurately, mail-in ballot applications must be returned two Fridays before an election, instead of one Friday.
  - Counties will begin mailing ballots four weeks before the election, streamlining the process by three weeks.
  - Prohibits state and local governments from sending unsolicited applications.
  - Third-party groups can only send mail-in ballot applications to voters who have not requested one and must clearly identify the application as an unofficial publication.
  - Requires absentee ballots to be printed on special paper, and voters must provide an ID number and signature.
- **Requires voters to use ID to ensure election integrity.**
  - Requesting and returning a mail-in ballot requires ID (driver’s license number, state ID or other approved ID) and can be done through a new online system that will be launched by the Secretary of State.
  - In-person voting also requires ID along with name, date of birth, and address, plus voters must sign an oath swearing that information is correct.
- **Expands the ease and access to voting, standardizes processes, and increases transparency.**
  - Early voting will be expanded in most areas. Hours can be 7:00 am to 7:00 pm or 9:00 am to 5:00 pm and adds an additional mandatory Saturday, with Sunday voting hours optional.
  - Prohibits mobile voting.
  - Requires large signage to notify voters of polling place changes or closures.
  - Large polling places with line waits of more than an hour and more than 2,000 voters are required to hire more staff or split up precincts.

- Adds food and water to the list of gifts and campaign material that cannot be handed out to voters in line but allows unmanned water stations to be set up and groups to hand out water if they remain outside the specified buffer area.
  - Improves daily reporting of absentee ballots received and early voting.
  - Provides county officials with more flexibility to choose equipment for smaller, lower turnout races.
  - Promotes uniformity of election operations funding between counties by prohibiting outside money from being used to administer elections.
  - Georgia's run-off period shortened to four weeks instead of nine weeks.
  - In case there is a run-off, military and overseas voters will be mailed an instant ranked choice run-off ballot with their regular ballot.
- **Prevents ballot harvesting.**
    - Legalizes absentee ballot drop boxes
    - Requires drop boxes to be located inside voting sites and capped at one per 100,000 active voters.
- **Improves vote processing accuracy and timeliness.**
    - Officials can begin processing absentee ballots (not counting) two weeks before the election.
    - Counties must finish tabulating all the votes by 5:00 pm the day after election.
- **Provides more oversight of election officials to ensure adherence to the law.**
    - Removes the Secretary of State as the chair of the State Election Board.
    - Expands oversight of local election officials.
    - Prohibits the Board and staff from entering into any settlement agreements without notifying lawmakers first.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://legiscan.com/GA/bill/SB202/2021>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/03/26/us/biden-news-today>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/03/30/biden-falsely-claims-new-georgia-law-ends-voting-hours-early/>

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gpb.org/news/2021/03/27/what-does-georgias-new-voting-law-sb-202-do>